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## INTERNATIONAL

### END OF NAKASONE ERA

# Japan's spirited premier takes quiet look back

In wide-ranging interview, Nakasone is positive about foreign policy and economic record, but has some regrets on home front

By Takashi Oka

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Tokyo

The most fundamental aspect of the relationship between the United States and Japan is not trade, but the security link, says outgoing Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

In an exclusive Monitor interview last week, the ebullient, activist leader who has been at Japan's helm for the past five years likened US-Japanese ties to a plant. The economic relationship "is the flower that you see blooming above ground. But deep down, at a level most eyes cannot reach, is the security link. That is what forms the roots of the US-Japan relationship."

The prime minister also took up the following topics:

**US-Japan trade problems:** "Both sides know what the problems are and what track to pursue in solving them. The question is how to speed up the process."

**Japan-Soviet relations:** "No Japanese prime minister can afford to give way on the territorial issue [Japan's claim to four Soviet-occupied islands off Hokkaido]. If he did, he will have to resign forthwith."

**Japan-China relations:** "We must keep China as a good friend of the free world. China opposes

hegemonism. So do we." (Hegemonism is shorthand for Soviet expansionism.)

**Successor Noboru Takeshita:**

"He has great abilities in handling domestic policies. But being a consensus-seeker, he tends to take a long time. Once he becomes prime minister, he will see the need for tempo."

These days, the media focuses on trade and economic problems between Japan and the US, and Mr. Nakasone does not deny the importance of these issues. But for many years, his own interest has been geopolitics and global strategy. He positions Japan firmly within the Western camp and acknowledges that Japan's tremendous economic growth during the postwar decades owes much to US help.

Today, when the US is struggling with its "twin deficits" – the federal budget and foreign trade – "Japan should take appropriate action in the defense field," Nakasone says, "reflecting changes in the relative positions of both sides. Such actions should be satisfactory to both sides."

He also cautions that his country's defense efforts must never get to the point where its Asian neighbors consider themselves threatened.

He decided against sending Japa-

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**"Our external problems can only be solved on the basis of domestic reforms. [As] we carry out reforms at home . . . we gain the right to speak up in international affairs."**

– Yasuhiro Nakasone